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PUBLICATIONS

News Notes

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REWRITE RECIPE

The easiest-reading farm management bulletin to come to light yet is Iowa State College Bulletin P 32, "Farming Today for Young Men and Women." So Mrs. Cowing, of the Readability Unit, tells us, and she ought to know. She estimates that it averages 7th grade level--on a par with Wallace's Farmer and the Farm Journal, for instance. Six samples, tested by the Flesch readability formula, range from 6th to 9th grade level.

Fred Ferguson, Iowa State College bulletin editor, tells us that Hadley Read, assistant extension editor, is largely responsible for the fact that the bulletin is so interesting and easy to read. Hadley took the material which the three authors had prepared and rewrote it. How? Let's see what Hadley has to say about it:

"I doubt if there is any set program a person can follow in attempting to rewrite material to improve readability....But there seem to be some general ingredients that can go into nearly every rewrite recipe.

"I'd list the complete cooperation of the original author or authors as first consideration. Once an editor has sold a specialist or a research worker on the need for simplifying his writing, half the battle is won. We had that cooperation from the authors of the bulletin Farming Today...

"By working with the author, get a clear-cut picture of the exact audience to be reached and be familiar with the audience. In this case we knew we were writing for young men and women, especially those who had not had too much farming experience.

"Next, forget that you are planning and writing material for an 'audience' and select just one or two persons with whom you are going to discuss this particular problem. After all, no one is going to read a bulletin before an audience. The audience for a bulletin consists of 'one person at a time.' In working on the farming bulletin, I had in mind the young couple pictured on the cover. This young war veteran and his wife came from a small town and are just getting started in farming.

"Always working with the author, agree on the main high lights that are to be brought out. What impression is to be left? What conclusions are to be reached? Once this is done, the material can be reorganized to focus attention on the high lights. This often will mean a completely new outline.

"Once you have a clear picture of the over-all audience, have picked out a single person from that audience, have agreed on the purpose of the material and have it outlined on paper, the actual writing is easy. Just assume that this single person you have in mind walked into the office and you started talking to him about the subject you're supposed to write about. Instead of talking, write it. That may sound trite, but it works."

Among other things, we'd like to call your attention to the frequent use of live subheads in good bold type. We wish the bulletin opened up to something more interesting than a blank page 2 and the label "Preface" on page 3, which hardly does justice to the well-written material under it. The cover picture is swell (this time, Dutch, the characters really look like farm folks on the job).

For the nice job on this bulletin, a bouquet to Fred Ferguson and the three authors, as well as to Hadley. We think he should have been listed as one of the authors. Some of you have received your copy of the bulletin direct from Ames. For those who haven't, we're enclosing a copy. Look on page 717 for two of the young Fergusons. The picture was taken 4 years ago for a Farm Science Reporter cover.

MOSQUITO STORY

'T aint so--that Jersey skeeters are larger, more numerous, or more vicious than those in other areas. And if you don't believe us, we refer you to New Jersey's new Agricultural Experiment Station Circular 502, "The Story of the Mosquito."

We think that the text is a humdinger--written so that Jerseyites will want to read about their famous insects. It's written informally, appealingly, and clearly. Mrs. Amy Cowing, of the Division of Field Studies and Training, estimates that it's "fairly easy reading"--7th grade level. Most of the samples turned out to be 6th and 7th grade level, and only one was estimated to be as hard as 9th grade level.

Mrs. Horminie B. Kitchen, editor of technical publications for the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, tells us that Dorothy Smith, of Sam Rock's staff, wrote it. Mrs. Kitchen says, "The entomology department gathered the facts together, and among the members; produced reports of what they wanted in the circular. Then they turned the stuff over to Dorothy, who wrote it up in consultation with our mosquito expert. The manuscript was studied by the members of the entomology department and then brought up before the Mosquito Extermination Association and before the agencies endorsing the circular. Eventually the wrinkles were ironed out and the material was given final approval."

We believe the bulletin would be more effective if the typography and handling of pictures and charts lived up to the peppy nature of the text. This could not be fully achieved in practice, however, since the editorial department did not have a free hand. We particularly question the cover lay-out of nine little pictures in geometrical shapes. Not only is this lay-out faulty and the pictures deprived of meaning but it makes a poor background for the title. Page 2 is reminiscent of a printer's type sample book. We like the scheme of running a good-sized picture with its legend right under it, as on page 20, much better than grouping pictures together and grouping legends separately, as on pages 18 and 19.

For your consideration: We'd like to suggest that when an information worker does a writing or rewriting job on a bulletin, as Dorothy Smith has done here, his or her name should be given as author or joint author.

FIRST OF THE CROP

First of this year's crop of printed annual reports on 1946 extension work came in from Arkansas, and we think it's a pretty nice job. Brief text, good pictures, large type with ample leading, a bright cover, and a generally clean-cut appearance are among its assets.

Glenn Rutledge and his associates seem to have done a good job of thinking out what they wanted to say, sifting out the chaff, and proceeding to tell 'em. He explains, "Although good paper is still critically short here, we used pictures and 11-point type. We balanced this by being as brief as possible and using all the available space in the book."

Like many other extension annual reports, this has an estimated readability of "Fairly difficult" or high school level, according to the Federal office readability unit. The difficulty seems due to long, hard words.

The body type is 11-on-12 Baskerville, the chapter headings are 24-point Ludlow Medium, and the subheads are 14-point Vogue. We think the effect is harmonious and the bulletin quite readable typographically.

We questioned the full-page bled cut on the back of the back cover page and wondered just what it shows and how it contributes to the report. Glenn replies that he still likes it, but believes it would have been better to identify the forest and point out that it is an example of selective cutting.

The report covers the 12-month period ending November 30. By advance planning with the printer, cooperation of all the staff, and some overtime work, Glenn tells us, the booklet made a first-of-the-year deadline, coming out in advance of the meeting of the Arkansas General Assembly. The report was published as Arkansas Extension Circular 445, "Food for Peace." A copy is enclosed for you.

MINNESOTA'S FIRST

"Our brain child, the first annual report we have ever printed"--this is how Paul Johnson, Gopher State extension editor, describes the new 8- by 10½-inch booklet, "Extension Work in Minnesota, 1946." It is a combined annual report and account of the background, purposes, and work of the Minnesota Extension Service. Your copy is enclosed. Your director already has a copy.

Here's what Paul has to say about the booklet: "We have felt the need of it for some time, especially for distribution to a great many loyal supporters of extension in urban areas who have had only a vague idea of how extension works and how its various activities are related to each other. It is being distributed by agents themselves in the counties. Only 'officialdom' and the metropolitan lists are being taken care of from the State office.

"Full responsibility for the publication, including preparation of copy, was centered in two people, the assistant director and the editor. The freedom of action

possible under this arrangement is responsible in large measure for any special merit the final product has. Typographically we did our best with the money available. We shot the works on pictures and arrangement and saved on special art.....

"The greatest usefulness of the book is that it tells just what extension is, placing great emphasis on the teamwork between the agent and the farmer and the important part played by farm people in building the program.....

"The reception has been excellent, both among farm people who got about two-thirds of the 20,000 copies, and among urban people who got the other third. Farm leaders, legislators, and commercial people are especially warm in their praise. They recognized at once that they had for the first time a story that can be told and understood anywhere."

Mrs. Amy Cowing, of the Readability Unit, estimates that the text is "fairly difficult reading"--high school level. Fourteen samples range from 8th grade to college graduate level.

Typographically we like the simple lay-outs with the large body type and the big pictures permitted by the quarto size. The maroon ink used for headings and screened to tints for art effects promotes reader interest, we believe. The type is 11-on-12 Electra. This seems large enough for the few 27- and 30-pica lines, as well as being well suited to easy reading of the more common 16-pica lines. We like the idea of reproducing and telling about the cover picture on page 2. Some of the cuts have individual legends and others have group legends. We are inclined to think, though, that practically every picture should have its own legend which tells specifically what it shows.

NEW ENGLAND COOPERATIVE BULLETINS

Nine more New England 4-H Club bulletins and folders are in the cards following last week's meeting of the region's State club leaders in Springfield, Mass.

Oley Oleson, Massachusetts extension information specialist, attended the meeting and discussed a suggested step-by-step procedure for handling the planning, writing, clearing, and printing of interstate extension bulletins. The plan was worked out by him; Radie Bunn, Bay State extension editor; and Jack Spaven, Vermont extension editor, based on experience in handling the cooperative bulletins that have been printed to date. Oley sent us a copy of the plan and reported that he's trying to get comments and suggestions on it. It will be ironed out at the Northeastern AAACE Meeting in New York City next month.

According to the plans made at last week's conference, New England 4-H publications will be issued on the following subjects: Health, the improvement of home grounds, room improvement, and handicrafts. In addition there will be a leaders' handbook, a 4-H promotion leaflet, a song booklet, an organization handbook on extension work with young adults, and a leaflet on 4-H Club work for older members.

